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BRASS BEDSTEADS.

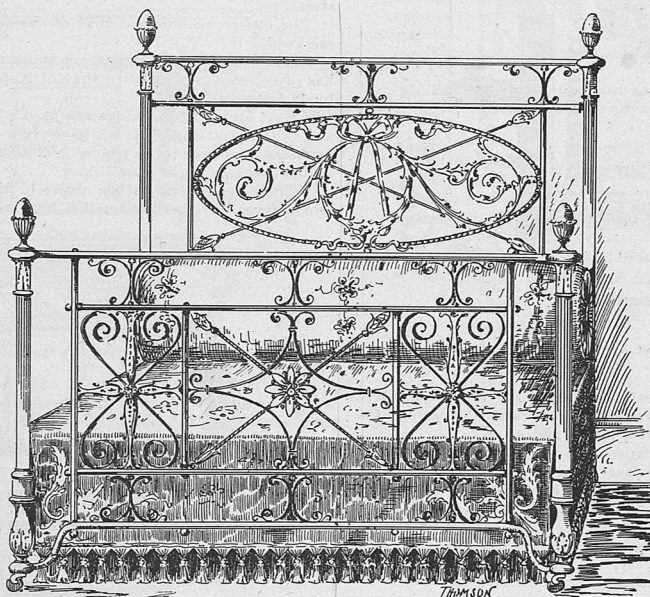
By JAMES THOMSON.



RASS beds are coming into more general use every day. The demand for them is steadily on the increase, among persons of moderate means as well as those with wealth at their command. It can be said in their favor that they have the merit of cleanliness, can be kept looking well by daily wiping with a soft cloth and are comparatively inexpensive. The brass and iron bedsteads have been in general use in Europe since the city of Birmingham, in England, has gained a world-wide reputation in their manufacture. Our American mechanics are not to be left behind in this branch of industrial effort, and some of them claim to make better beds than the English can produce. Not being conversant with the technicalities of manufacture, we will be obliged to take their word for it. There is this much to be said in favor of the English bed—the color of the lacquer seems to be of a richer tone, the American having more of a yellow, brassy appearance. Aside from this there is really nothing to influence one in deciding between them, the designs, with a few exceptions, being practically the same—a collection of tubes with certain variations in arrangement. There has been no improvement in the designs of brass beds since the exhibition of 1851, some of the patterns of that period excelling those shown to-day. Our American makers have been satisfied to follow when they ought to lead. Let some of them courageously break away from the aggregation of tubes idea and give us something fresh and more in consonance with the wants and desires of the present generation.

It is not to be presumed from what is here said that we advocate putting a lot of gimcrack ornamentation on these beds, for we are not in favor of anything of the sort. The general design of such a piece of furniture should be plain and substantial, but there are great possibilities in the way of decorative effort in the confirmation of the general outline and the adaptation of ornamental forms to accentuate the general design. Whatever change we have let it be for the better, let us have none of the dimsy "struck up" ornamentation made out of brass sheets not much thicker than paper. In some of the American beds we see a tendency to this class of work.

Our illustration shows a very handsome brass bedstead recently made from a special design on an order. The ornamentation was carefully chased and the finish was that known as ornolu. As will be noted, it is a decided departure in conception from those usually seen, and although too elaborate and costly for ordinary purposes, may be of value in pointing the direction in which an improvement in the matter of design may be sought for.



BRASS BED. DESIGNED BY JAMES THOMSON.

DECORATIVE NOTES.

A BOX ottoman may be made of a round wooden box seventeen inches high and six inches wide each way, with lid to take off, and may be used as a seat and to hold small requisites. The inside may be lined with woolen stuff, linen or leather. An embroidered border fourteen inches wide is put on plain around the ottoman and edged below with a frill of cashmere, the color of the groundwork of the border. A somewhat smaller frill trims the lid, which is to be covered inside and out with a strip of canvas drawn together in the middle under a button. Large bows of ribbon may fasten the ring for taking up the lid.

IN the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, various sculptors in ivory were engaged in carving portions of tusks with classical and other subjects, which were afterward mounted in silver or silver-gilt by some of the finest Augsburg and Nuremberg workers, and formed vases and tankards. In the eighteenth century various carvings in ivory were made, chiefly of statuettes and small plaques, and in modern times, the ivory carvings of India have become noted for their minute and delicate work.

In China and Japan the carving of ivory balls inside one another has been especially noted. Many theories have been formed as to how these balls have been cut; perhaps a probable one is that a ball of ivory was taken, around the upper and lower ends of which four small holes were carved out, gradually diminishing in size toward the centre until the axis of the one hole met the axis of the other or lower one at right angles in the centre of the ball; and that then small tools were inserted, and a thin layer of ivory, forming a part of a circle from one hole to its lower corresponding one, was cut and loosened from the whole mass. So, gradually cutting from one hole to the next one, a complete inner circle was eventually loosened, the circles themselves afterward being cut into the required pattern.

IN the newest brocatelles the designs are very good. No longer are those who have to be content with the less expensive materials compelled to live with badly drawn designs. These of the latest brocatelles are but little behind those of the silk brocades, whilst the cost is about one-third of the silks. This remark holds equally good for the embossed velvets, which are made in six different colors, and drape excellently; indeed, in this respect they are in advance of the heavier velvets. Stripes are things of the past; they are only present in the pretty, inexpensive Algerian curtains and materials, which are so invaluable in making small houses look cheery. The newest are rather delicately tinted in comparison with those of former seasons.

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